

Interviewed: April 22, 1976

Tape 85, 1

STARTER: Mr. Donald McKay,
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David Stevenson - Researcher

- Father came to Richmond in 1890 from Woodstock, Ontario.
- He worked on Steve's farm and then he rented the store from Grauer's and he and Sam Churchill ran the store for several years.
- Around 1903 he moved on to the Brighthouse, leased land and went farming until 1930.
- Donald took over the land during the depression until 1935.
- He was also, at this time, working at the Brighthouse race track which was Minoru track before the war.
- Racing seasons were only 14 days long, which is why they built the Lansdowne race track so they could have more days to race.
- They also raced at the Willows in Victoria and Exhibition Park.
- Horses were moved in freight cars on the B. C. Electric Railway.
- Most of the horses were from California in those days.
- During the 1920's there were not too many local horses racing.
- No farmers had race horses, you had to have money to own and race a horse.
- Closed down Brighthouse in 1942, Lansdowne and Exhibition Park continued.
- He owned the team which watered the track and the harrows.
- Then he operated the starting gate and worked as assistant-starter until 1960 and then he got the job as starter.
- None of the tracks are as good today as Brighthouse was...it was considered the best track in North America...good soil.
- Lansdowne was peaty, too soft; they mixed sand and manure with it.
- The top couple of inches should be soft.
- At Exhibition Park, top layer is sand and you have to keep it wet.
- Today, everything is taped by the T.V.'s and you can watch each one a second time on the video tape.
- Not too many horses from California this year, most of them are local.
- There are about 400 two year olds each year, many come from Abbotsford and Chilliwack.
- The purses have increased every year.
- There are several big races each season which runs now from April to October.

Donald McKay

HORSE RACING

- He had a brood mare, raised a few colts and sold them.
- Jim Pollock raised one colt and she did all right and the other one ended up in Spokane as a brood mare...her name was Ten Buttons.
- It is an expensive sport...the sport of kings.
- Local owners who are successful are: Ed Simonelli, the Gilmours, Clyne Huggard, Alan May and the Jensens.
- The Lansdowne track was a mile long with a big grandstand.
- Eventually they were losing money on Lansdowne because people couldn't get there...access was difficult.
- Even when the Oak Street Bridge opened, it didn't help.
- Last year of racing was 1960.
- Randall owned Brighthouse and Lansdowne, joined up with Mr. Diamond.
- The land was owned by the B. C. Jockey Club, an association of owners.
- Gambling has always been a big part of horse racing.
- People go to Seattle on Sunday, just to gamble at the track.
- The gambling has always been controlled by the Federal Government.
- The horses have improved over the years through breeding programs.
- The Jockey Club buys good two year olds from California and sells them to improve the local breed.
- A good two year old can cost up to \$30,000, usually around \$10,000 to \$15,000.
- Horses are allowed to run until they are eleven years old...most horses reach their peak at four or five years of age.
- The older horses run for cheaper prices.
- Would be jockeys work in the barn and start with exercising the horses.
- The Jockey Club licenses the jockeys.
- The Federal Government regulates the whole race business and takes about 20% of the gate.
- The jockeys get so much for riding and so much for a win.
- Monday there were 11,000 people at Exhibition Park track.
- At the old Minoru track, the center field was used for polo.
- There was a good polo club in those days.
- Early airplanes used to land there at Minoru.
- A common injury for two year olds is their bruised shins, when they bolt and sometimes they break their legs.
- Last season there were sixteen killed over one hundred days of racing because of broken legs.

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HORSE RACING

- Sam Gilmour lives on Steveston Highway and he knows all about the old days of racing.
- Les Gilmour, his brother, still owns race horses on No. 4 Road.
- The development of Richmond and the loss of farm land is discussed.
- Exhibition Park is getting to be too small for all the people.
- The track might be moved but where to?